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S. Goodman

(Top Secret Control Officer)

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This document consists of 8 pages

Re: 3 of 10 Copies, Series A

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- 1- Secy
- 2- S/P - Military
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January 20, 1959 - G/Murphy

6- G. Reinhardt

7- ~~Ed~~ ~~Reinhardt~~ ~~HVH~~

8- S/S

9- S/S

10- ~~Ed~~ ~~Reinhardt~~ ~~HVH~~

TO: S - The Secretary

THROUGH: S/S
G - Mr. Murphy

FROM: S/P - Gerard C. Smith

SUBJECT: Review of Strategic Concept

In your letter of July 23, 1958, to the President, you said you had told Secretary McElroy that you remained of the opinion that the military doctrine set forth in paragraphs 13 and 14 of the Basic National Security Policy paper (Tab A) is rapidly outgrowing its usefulness and that we need to apply ourselves urgently to finding an alternative strategic concept. You stated also that we should seek the President's approval of further study of an alternative doctrine by a small State-Defense group. You will recall that the President later gave his approval for this study.

When I approached Defense on this subject in early August, they requested that the study be deferred until the FY 1960 budget was behind them. I accordingly let the matter lie dormant.

The budget process is now drawing to a close, and we should press ahead without further delay. My talks with General Ficher, Director of the Joint Staff of the JCS, and others in the Pentagon have convinced me that we must take the initiative, as Defense and the Chiefs seem to be paralyzed by inter-service differences.

S/P has accordingly ventured to draft "A Concept of US Military Strategy for the 1960s" (Tab C) to serve as a basis of discussion with the Pentagon. This concept, which I believe reflects views that you have expressed in several conversations with Secretary McElroy, differs from the current strategic concept in the following major respects:

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1. We abandon the major premise of the current concept -- i.e. the threat of massive nuclear retaliation is the primary deterrent to all kinds of Communist aggression. A corollary current premise is that general war forces are also limited war forces. Our premise is that the massive retaliation threat of our general war capability effectively deters only major Communist aggression. To prevent limited Communist aggression, a separate deterrent strategy and force, specifically designed for this purpose, is required.

2. We also abandon a major thesis of the current concept -- i.e. any substantial overt engagement of US and USSR armed forces or any substantial Soviet aggression against the NATO area would automatically trigger massive nuclear retaliation against the USSR. As you have pointed out, this thesis is becoming less and less credible. Although not specifically stated in our paper, we assume the probability of a lesser US response to Soviet aggression which does not clearly threaten a permanent alteration of the world balance of power against us.

3. We question the current counter-force strategy which provides that the primary mission of our strategic nuclear striking force is to destroy military targets, especially nuclear strike capabilities, in the Communist empire. We believe that this strategy will become increasingly infeasible in the dawning era of quick-reacting and elusive missile weapons systems. Moreover, the destruction of many military targets would require ground bursts of very large yield weapons with resultant heavy fall-out, the effects of which, in addition to causing millions of unnecessary casualties in the Communist empire, would extend around the world. Finally, the cost of matching the Communists missile for missile, an inherent necessity of the counter-force strategy, would in a very few years require defense budgets substantially larger than the much debated FY 1960 budget. You will recall that the President has on a number of occasions expressed concern that we seem to be "over-insuring" by accumulating too many strategic weapons systems. Our paper, therefore, inclines toward an alternative strategy, which has many adherents in the Pentagon, of striking a finite number of control centers and power bases of the Communist empire. Although the prime targets of this strategy are population centers, the fall-out effects and the number of casualties would be far less than under a counter-force strategy as we believe that air bursts of many fewer weapons of much lower yield would suffice to accomplish the mission.

4. Because

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4. Because we incline to a smaller strategic striking force, we place much greater emphasis than the present concept on the invulnerability of the force.

5. We question a major assumption of the current concept -- i.e. nuclear weapons will be used in most limited war situations. The fact is that whenever the issue has arisen in the past decade, we have consistently drawn back from using nuclear weapons in limited war situations. We believe that we would rarely find it politically practicable or militarily desirable to use nuclear weapons and accordingly propose that our limited war force be able to fight effectively without these weapons.

Since the question of cost is now very much to the fore, it is pertinent to mention my belief that it is reasonable to assume that the savings resulting from a shift to a smaller strategic nuclear striking force would offset the increased costs of an effective limited war force.

As you indicated to the President that the review of the strategic concept would be held very closely, I have sought clearance of this memorandum from G and C only.

Recommendation

It is recommended that you sign the attached letter (Tab B) to Secretary McElroy transmitting the S/P paper as a basis for State-Defense discussion.

Attachments:

NSC 5810/1 (Tab A)
Letter to Secretary McElroy (Tab B)
S/P Draft Paper (Tab C)

Approved JFD 1/24/59

Disapproved _____

Concurrence:

C

S/P:EQMathews:AVH

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